



U.S. Department of Justice

**Ronald C. Machen Jr.**  
*United States Attorney for the  
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center  
555 Fourth St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530*

---

## **PRESS RELEASE**

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, June 28, 2011

**For Information Contact:**

**Public Affairs**

(202) 252-6933

<http://www.justice.gov/usao/dc/news/2011/apr/news.html>

### **Former D.C. Council Chief of Staff Sentenced To Eight-Month Prison Term For Accepting Illegal Gratuities And Making a False Statement - Defendant Took Part in Scheme Involving D.C. Taxi Industry -**

WASHINGTON - Ted G. Loza, the former chief of staff for a District of Columbia Council member, was sentenced today to eight months in prison for his role in a large-scale, long-term scheme to corrupt the taxicab industry in Washington, D.C.

The sentencing, which took place this morning, was announced by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., James W. McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, and Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

Loza, 46, pled guilty in February 2011 to two charges of accepting illegal gratuities and one charge of making a false statement to the District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics. He was sentenced by Senior Judge Paul L. Friedman. Upon completion of his prison term, Loza will be placed on four months of supervised release. The judge also ordered Loza to perform 150 hours of community service for what he called an abuse of public trust.

"In this case, the victims are the citizens of the District of Columbia, who are entitled to honest government," Judge Friedman declared at the sentencing.

Loza, of Washington, D.C., is among 27 people who have pled guilty in the investigation. He was a member of the staff of Council member Jim Graham, and was chief of staff from 2007 until November 2009. In connection with his guilty plea, Loza admitted that in June and July of 2009, while working as the chief of staff, he received \$1,500 in cash payments from Abdul Kamus, then a representative of individuals having a financial interest in the District of Columbia taxicab industry.

These cash payments were accepted by Loza for his assistance with legislation for a hybrid vehicle exception to a moratorium on new taxicab company licenses in the District of Columbia. The legislation was introduced by Council member Graham on June 30, 2009.

Loza also admitted that in May of 2009, he submitted a false financial disclosure statement to the District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics that failed to reflect gifts in excess of \$100 from Kamus during 2008.

Previously, Kamus, 54, of Silver Spring, Md., pled guilty to charges of bribery and conspiracy to commit bribery in connection with his contacts with Loza and other activities. He is awaiting sentencing in U.S. District Court.

In addition to Loza and Kamus, those convicted include Yitbarek Syume, 53, of Silver Spring, Md., Berhane Leghese, 46, of Arlington, Va., and Amanuel Ghirmazion, 53, of Washington, D.C. All three men pled guilty in March 2011 to conspiring to commit bribery.

Syume, Leghese and Ghirmazion admitted to conspiring to bribe public officials in an effort to obtain multi-vehicle taxicab company licenses in a scheme that lasted from September 2007 until September 2009. This scheme, an attempt to corner the market in the D.C. taxicab industry, involved approximately \$270,000 in illegal payments and attempted illegal payments. Syume, Leghese and Ghirmazion also are awaiting sentencing in U.S. District Court.

The other guilty pleas came in an unrelated case involving the issuance of taxicab operator licenses. In that matter, a total of 22 people have pled to charges and 15 are awaiting trial.

“Today’s sentence demonstrates our steadfast commitment to aggressively investigating and prosecuting cases of public corruption in the District of Columbia,” said U.S. Attorney Machen. “This defendant is one of 27 people convicted in a multi-year investigation into the District of Columbia’s taxicab industry. Now, instead of continuing to line his own pockets at the expense of the District’s taxpayers, Mr. Loza will be spending the next eight months in prison.”

“Unfortunately some public servants expect their position gives them the right to illegally profit,” said Assistant Director McJunkin. “Today’s sentence is a reminder that taking illegal gratuities and lying about it has its consequences.”

In announcing today’s sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen, Assistant Director in Charge McJunkin, and Chief Lanier commended the work of FBI Special Agents on the case, as well as MPD Sergeant Andrew Struhar, Detective Joseph Sopata and Detective Elliott Taylor. They also acknowledged the efforts of the staff of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, including Paralegals Jeannette Litz, Carolyn Cody and Jared Forney, Joshua Ellen, of the Litigation Technology Unit,

Page -3-

and Assistant U.S. Attorney John Crabb Jr. and former Assistant U.S. Attorney John Griffith, who investigated and prosecuted the case.

11-273

###